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Paul and Christ

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Ecumenical Trends

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On Balance

"The reform at which the Council aims is not then a subversion of the present life of the Church, nor is it a rupture with its traditions inasmuch as these are essential and venerable, but rather a homage to these very traditions which one longs to liberate from all out-dated and defective forms in order to make them more genuine." These words were spoken by Pope Paul VI at the opening of the Second session of Vatican II. The "Dutch Catechism" puts it all a trifle more succinctly when it says, "Everything that lives has both to remain itself and to renew itself."

No city on earth is experiencing the distress that results from the conflicting claims of the old and the new than the Church in Washington, D.C., at this very moment. The news media can and does carry the superficial details of this conflict. But they cannot adequately convey the sense of anguish that good people must endure as the local Catholic community painfully grows to authentic self-awareness. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Catholics everywhere are experiencing the inevitable tensions that accompany a passage from "out-dated and defective forms" to a truer, richer, conscious and agreed corporate identity.

But if Catholic Washington is undergoing an agonizing "dark night" the situation is by no means altogether bleak. In the same city, and at the heart of ecclesiastical conflict, a symposium on "Rights in the Church" is now under way. Sponsored by the Canon Law Society of America and the Catholic University of America, distinguished scholars are discussing brilliantly a "Declaration of Christian Freedoms."

This symposium brings serene, trustworthy illumination to many hotly disputed issues brought to the surface by Catholic reform. Fortunately, the papers from two previous similar conferences sponsored by the American canonists are available in "Law For Liberty," edited by James E. Biechler (Helicon) and "We the People of God," edited by James A. Coriden (Sunday Visitor Press). They both deserve the widest possible attention.

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Joseph Blenkinsopp

What Did Christ Mean to Paul?

Anyone who wants to understand Paul—even the uncommitted historian who acknowledges the enormous influence which he has exercised on the history of the last one thousand nine hundred years—has to start by asking that question. All the more so the Christian for whom his faith is a reality; he must ask it not in the spirit of a revivalist meeting which leaves one either amused or embarrassed, but soberly and objectively. It may mean putting out of our minds for the moment some rather second-class examples of religious art and some overemotional sermons we may have heard. Paul's kind of concern goes far beyond this level. "For me," he wrote to the Christians of Philippi, "to be alive means Christ." What did he mean?

We might begin by saying what he did not mean. *One thing that strikes the first-time reader of Paul's letters is that they give us so few facts or details about the life of Christ.* It would be too bad if we had to reconstruct that life on the basis of what we find there. He tells us that Jesus was of David's race (Romans 1:3), mentions his being born of a woman, though he does not follow this up as the later apocryphal writings do (Galatians 4:4). Nothing about his family, the public ministry, no harrowing details about the passion; hardly anything, in short, outside of the mere "event" of death-resurrection and the celebration of the death in the eucharistic meal (I Corinthians 11). There are references to Christ's teaching necessary for the moral formation

of his Christians; and he actually gives us a saying which we do not find in the Gospels. He sums it up by stating quite plainly that he is not interested in knowing Christ "from a human point of view" (II Corinthians 5:16).

Why this distressing lack of interest in the life of Jesus which we find in Paul and the early Christians in general? The reason is surely that *they were so overwhelmed by the presentness of Christ with them in their life together in community, experienced in a direct and powerful way* as will be evident to anyone reading Acts, that this just did not occur to them. Others had known the Lord in flesh and blood ("... that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and touched with our hands..." (I John 1:1); but for Paul, after his experience, and for his Christians, he was present "in spirit." This was not just in the rather vague way in which we speak of a dead person's spirit living on after him. When Peter had to find a way of explaining what had happened at the first Pentecost, he quoted from one of the prophets a passage about the "pouring out of the Spirit" in the last age, and it is the Spirit which makes Christ present to the Church and to each Christian, a presence which is, however, impossible to the person

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who chooses to remain on the purely natural level. For Paul, too, this new presence is made possible through the risen Christ, since for him "the Lord is the Spirit" (II Corinthians 3:18).

There is another aspect to this. Paul and his Christians did not think of the resurrection as a past event which continued to influence their lives; they saw themselves as living *within* an event which began with the resurrection but which has yet to be completed in the coming of the risen Lord in a future which for many of them must have seemed imminent. This total event is divided up for us in the Creed: "crucified, dead and buried . . . descended into hell . . . the third day rose again from the dead . . . ascended into heaven . . . from thence he shall come," but for the first Christians these were different stages in the one final intervention of God in history by which he has chosen to bring the whole process to perfection in "the fullness of time."

READING THE GOSPELS

When we think of this it is easy to see why the early Church did not show so much interest in the material details of the thirty-five to forty years that Jesus lived on this earth. We might feel sorry about this, and have thoughts about what would have happened if he had lived in our day, with television, tape recorders, photography . . . perhaps the visit of Pope Paul VI to Palestine might give us some vague and remote idea. Of course, the supposition is not well-founded since the realization always comes too late—as it did for so many of the contemporaries of Jesus in the first century. At any rate, the writing up of "all that Jesus began to do and to teach" was undertaken thoroughly only when the prospect of an immediate return in glory paled with the passing of time, in particular after the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). In reading the four Gospels we have always to bear in mind that gap of thirty years or so between the death of the Lord and their composition.

What *was* of vital interest to the apostolic community of Jerusalem, to Stephen

and the Hellenistic missionaries and to Paul, was *spreading the oral Gospel, the "good news of God," namely, how God had brought his promises, of which the scriptures speak, to completion in the death and resurrection of Jesus.* Notice how Ananias, in explaining the meaning of Paul's apparition to him in Damascus, says: "The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will" (Acts 22:14). It was the same God of the fathers who had raised Jesus from the dead: "The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus whom you delivered up . . . whom God raised from the dead" (Acts 3:13-15). For these men the scriptures by which they had lived all their lives, the psalms they had recited in the synagogue, suddenly came alive. Given this final event they made sense; without it they continued to be a dark puzzle:

To this day (says Paul speaking of the Jews), when they read the Old Testament, the same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed.

(II Corinthians 3:14-16)

This means that sacred history, the history of salvation, the working of God throughout time and space, had come to completion in the event to which the apostolic community witnessed. This is what Luke is saying when he speaks of the different nationalities at Pentecost hearing proclaimed "the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11). This means also that Paul's understanding of Christ must have begun with the scriptures, that his experience must have given sense and coherence to what he already knew. This obliges us to follow the same line in our attempt to understand and then to live the central *fact* of our faith. It might be well, therefore, to trace out roughly the main lines of this understanding of Christ in the first years of the Church's history and to draw some conclusions.

In order to do this we might take a closer look at Peter's address to the Roman centurion and his family and retainers,

which we find in Luke's history of the early Church, the Acts of the Apostles. This took place only a few years after the crucifixion in the town of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast which was the Roman headquarters in Palestine. Since for Peter this was the first pagan, that is, non-Jewish family to be converted, the event must have had a special significance for him and this can in fact be inferred from the way he spoke. The address should be read carefully (see Acts 10:34-43) with the assistance of the following summary.

34-35 The whole object of life is *to be acceptable* to God ("acceptable" is really a liturgical term used of a sacrifice which God could accept, e.g. the sacrifice of Abel or Melchizedek). Following Christ in the Christian life is offered as a way of reaching this goal, as in fact *the* way, since it is the way offered positively by God himself, not thought out by man. This prepares for what follows.

36 The Christian message is *the Word* sent by God to Israel and then to the whole world; it is *the good news* which God gives through Jesus Christ.

37 A summary of the good news (i.e. the Gospel) follows. The general outline had already been fixed by constant repetition: ministry of John the Baptist—public ministry in Galilee—in Judea.

38 Summarized from a different angle: the *anointing with the Holy Spirit and with power* refers doubtless to the baptism of Jesus as the inauguration of his public ministry, while the word "power" suggests the miracles (in the Synoptic Gospels the word "power," *dynamis*, is the word used for "miracle"). This is completed by the reference to the healings and exorcisms which form such a great part of the written Gospels.

39-40 Leads up to the last phase—in Jerusalem. The climax is *one* event which has two sides: *they* put him to death; but *God* raised him on the third day and made him manifest. Death and resurrection are somehow part of the

one event, the climax of all salvation history.

41 The reality of the resurrection is emphasized by the fact that they *ate and drank* with him. Hence the great importance attached to witnesses of the resurrection, though there is no list given as is usual at this point in the summaries.

42 The coming of Christ to judge the world as the last stage of the great event of redemption which begins with crucifixion. We should note that God is still the subject of the whole action—he sends the good news (36), he is with Jesus (38), he raised him from the dead (40) and chose witnesses to the resurrection (41) and he finally appoints Christ as universal judge (42).

43 We are invited (with Cornelius) to answer this invitation by faith, that is, commitment of our lives, which brings with it the forgiveness of our sins.

PAUL'S PREACHING TO PAGANS

We might note, in addition, two discourses of Paul to pagan listeners: the first to a peasant audience at Konya (Acts 14: 15-17). There is no bible history as in the case we have considered—it would have meant nothing to them—but this is implied in the "good news" which is the call to turn away from idols to serve "the living God," that is, the God who is manifest in nature and in history. For converts with this background, sacred history as such would have to come at a later stage. The second is the address on Mars' Hill in Athens to a philosophical audience in which again Paul seeks a common denominator, in this case religious sentiment. Here again, it is not sacred history but a preparation for it, by showing how natural man, the ideal of Greek civilization at its best, does not achieve perfection by himself, but rather falls under the judgment of God which will be carried out by "a man" whom God has raised from the dead. At this point they stopped listening.

From this brief scheme, helped out by

the other New Testament summaries, we can easily deduce the basic structure of the Christian message and therefore of Paul's message. Sacred history is a continuous historical process set in motion by the promise which God made to Abraham and culminating in the "good news" that God had fulfilled this promise in the resurrection of Jesus. This last, however, implied certain facts about Jesus which we find here, and which were later filled out into the written Gospels. Thus, it is not difficult to see how the original pattern: John the Baptist; baptism of Jesus; ministry in Galilee, Judaea, Jerusalem; passion, death, burial and rising from the dead, which we find here in the original Jerusalem message and partially in that of Paul, was filled out by Mark the "interpreter" of Peter in his Gospel and how all the Gospels are dominated and dictated by the resurrection and were, so to speak, written backwards from this point. The resurrection implies the passion (they are really two "moments" of the same event) written to explain *why* rather than *how* Christ died—which has led one scholar to define a Gospel as a passion narrative with a long introduction (of 688 verses in Mark, 253, more than a third, deal with the last week in the life of Christ). All through the Gospels, finally, the link with the Old Testament is kept unbroken since Gospel is good news and the news is, according to Mark's version, that "the time (of fulfillment) is at hand."

FOUR KEY PROPOSITIONS

This is the Gospel Paul received, passed on, and was commissioned by the risen Lord to proclaim to all nations. We can begin to answer the question which stands at the head of this section only within this context. Perhaps it will clarify the issues implied in the question if we state the meaning of Christ for Paul in four propositions:

1. The risen Christ is the climax of salvation history
2. The risen Christ is God for us
3. Christianity is not a religion but a Person and an Event
4. God comes to us through Christ only

in the Church.

A brief note on each will not be out of place at this stage leaving further development to a later section.

1. *The Risen Christ Is the Climax of Salvation History*

Paul's vision led him to rethink the whole of his past life, his reading of the scriptures, his view of the world and of history. The bottom had suddenly fallen out of his life, up till that time based on the full observance of the Torah, the Jewish Law. From then onward the revelation of the risen Lord holds the center. This process, however, took a whole lifetime and we can trace its main stages in Acts and in the correspondence.

A. In the first stage, roughly down to the so-called "Council of Jerusalem" and the bitter struggle with the Judaeo-Christian element, Paul's presentation of the story of God's action in history, aiming to show how he fulfills the promises made to the holy men of the Old Testament period in Jesus, is identical with that of the Jerusalem apostolic community. This can be seen by glancing at the scheme of his synagogue sermon at Antioch in Pisidia (p. 125) and fits in with what he himself tells us about his visit to the leaders of the Jerusalem Church in order to "check" "the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain" (Galatians 2:2). This is important in showing us that there is no such thing as a "Pauline" doctrine apart from that of the Church and no real dispute, as was long supposed, between Paul and the primitive Church in Jerusalem.

B. The second stage corresponds with the first letters written by Paul which have survived. Most of Paul's letters had the object of keeping in touch with the communities he had set up, and while dealing to a great extent with the solution of everyday difficulties experienced by these communities, they give us a good guide to how his thinking about Christ and the Christ-event developed. Probably the earliest were the two short letters, which we call I and II Thessalonians, written to the newly-founded Christian community at Salonika. Since

this Church was, however, predominantly non-Jewish, there is little Old Testament history; in fact we find here the same approach as we have seen in Acts 14 with a pagan, peasant audience—beginning with the turning from idols to serve the living God, then the simple story of Jesus' death and resurrection. When, however, we turn to Galatians, written probably a couple of years later, we soon realize something has gone wrong. Instead of the usual warm opening phrases, he begins with a blunt negative and goes on at once to express not his thanksgiving, as is usual, but his astonishment. He is angry with a group of people who had "slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 2:4), whom later he does not hesitate to call "dogs" and "evil workers" (Philippians 3:2). These were the Judaeo-Christians who were teaching, in effect, that one had to be a Jew first and only then a Christian or, which comes to the same thing, that circumcision was a necessary condition for entering the Christian Church. This was a vital point since it implied that Christianity was to be a branch of Judaism and therefore not really a universal faith, and it led Paul to a vigorous reinterpretation of Old Testament history, somewhat along the lines of Stephen and the Hellenists.

PROMISES FULFILLED

His point is, briefly, that Judaism as a religious system has been canceled by what God has done in Christ. The pivotal point in the argument is Abraham to whom, in a strong and original phrase, the Gospel was preached in advance (Galatians 3:8), meaning that the promise which God made to this Aramaean sheik (Genesis 12:3) is fulfilled in its definitive form in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Since both circumcision and the Law were given later than this promise—in the latter case 430 years later (Galatians 3:17)—they play only a secondary role. Here (and elsewhere) Paul says something which must have seemed the ultimate in blasphemy to his one-time fellow-religionists, namely, that

the real purpose of the Law was to show up man's moral helplessness (since it was never really observed) and therefore the need for something of a higher order (Galatians 3:19-22; cf. also I Corinthians 15:56). The whole of the old order is pictured as a tutor or trustee for mankind during its minority; but the whole purpose of education, as both teachers and those taught will certainly agree, is that as soon as possible it may be dispensed with. And so Christianity is *mankind's coming of age*—the entering into the freedom of the children of God (Galatians 4:1-7). The old order dies with Christ on the cross (6:14).

THE NEW CREATION

The conclusion, therefore, is that Christ is indeed the climax of salvation history—and of all history—as supposed also in the early sermons in Acts; but this climax transcends the whole of this history, that is, goes beyond it and is the beginning of something absolutely new. Not only is it founded in a new covenant or alliance (I Corinthians 11:25), Christ is the new Adam, the first of the new race (Romans 5:12; I Corinthians 15:45) and the man that is "in Christ" is a "new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). This insight we owe to Paul.

C. Many of these eruptive and disruptive ideas reappear and are further developed and clarified in the letters to Corinth and Rome written towards the end of the fifth decade. We recall that Luke's story ends with the beginning of Paul's imprisonment (house arrest might be a more apt description) in Rome awaiting trial. During this enforced confinement of two years at Nero's pleasure, Paul had time to think over his tremendous experiences and work out some of the consequences. We find something of this process in the letters he dictated during this period to the communities at Philippi in Macedonia and those in the Roman province of Asia (Ephesians, Colossians).

Reading these magnificent statements of faith we note how the Jewish, Old Testament perspective has almost disappeared; Christ is the end, the goal, of a whole vast

process of movement and transformation within nature and of the long history of mankind from creation down to the present moment. In him, "the first-born from the dead," God's plan, the mystery hidden from ages (Colossians 1:26), is completed. This comprehensive plan of God, stretching through all time, includes first of all mankind, *us*—"God chose us in him from the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4)—but also the whole of the universe with its long history—"a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1:10). This forward movement can be satisfactorily explained, according to Paul, only from the end, the goal—the risen Lord who appeared to him on the Damascus road:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

(Colossians 1:15-20)

2. *The Risen Christ Is God for Us*

We may have noticed, in reading the New Testament summaries, something rather disconcerting. The public ministry is described as "mighty works and wonders and signs *which God did through him*"; God "raises" Jesus from the dead—in fact hardly ever in the New Testament does Jesus "rise" from the dead—and he does not "ascend" but is "taken up" into heaven (thus we should speak, as Luke in fact does in his Gospel (9:51), of an *assumption* rather than an *ascension*). Later on, in describing the work of redemption, Paul will say: "God was reconciling the world to himself *through Christ*" (II Corinthians 5:19).

In order to explain this, we have to

bear in mind that biblical revelation is different from any other religious system that we know of, in that while the latter deals with man striving for union with a god, the bible speaks to us of God coming to man. Here, it is God who acts, who takes the initiative. No other religious document we know is so realistic about sin and man's moral helplessness; and yet we note how God stays with the sinner and how the forward line continues in spite of sin. Thus, he clothes the first couple after their sin, he protects Cain from the consequences of his crime, he forgives David and gives him a son for the one who had died. In the different literary strands in the Old Testament, which are studied in other books of this series, he is represented in different ways as *the God who is near* and who has committed himself to complete what he has already initiated in the Alliance. On Sinai, in the Torah, he revealed himself as Will, but will is a function of personality and cannot exist, so to speak, up in the air. The Christ-event, therefore, is the point at which this same God reveals himself completely as person, the point at which he comes to us in the fullest possible way.

ARIAN HERESY

After centuries of controversy, especially the long debate with the followers of Arius in the third and fourth centuries, we now have a precise terminology to express the relationship of the Jesus of the Gospels to the divinity, and to avoid the kind of misinterpretation which was so common in the early centuries. The creeds state that Jesus "rose from the dead," "ascended into heaven." But, as we have seen, the way the New Testament speaks of these matters shows us that Jesus is not just a divine person as a sort of static element in the Trinity; the relationship is dynamic not static, for in him through the Spirit, God communicates to us his own life which we are invited to share as adopted sons with Christ the firstborn, the image, of God.

3. *Christianity Is Not a Religion but a Person and an Event*

The first followers of Jesus, after the resurrection, continued saying the same prayers (the psalms), frequenting the Temple, observing Jewish food laws and the rest—Jews practicing the Jewish faith. They realized that the event to which they testified and on the real historical truth of which they staked everything had fulfilled the old order, but they still saw this fulfillment *within* the old order—that is, as the culmination of Judaism.

ACHIEVING IDENTITY

It was only among the hard knocks of experience and in particular in the struggle with the extreme Judaic element in the early Church that Christians began to realize their real identity, their uniqueness. It is interesting in this respect to see how the new movement was identified and classified by others in this early period and how early Christians described themselves. Tertullus, spokesman for the Jews accusing Paul in Jerusalem, refers to him as “a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5)—meaning a heresy from official Judaism—a designation which Paul in his answer rejects. So, too, the Jewish delegation which meets Paul on his arrival in Rome (Acts 28:22). For the official Roman world, little interested in religions apart from their political implications, the Christian movement was indistinguishable from the Jewish “religion”—or “superstition” as the word is often translated. This comes through clearly in Festus’ laconic presentation of Paul’s case to king Agrippa: “They (i.e. his Jewish accusers) had certain points of dispute with him about their own superstition and about one Jesus who was dead but whom Paul asserted to be alive” (Acts 25:19).

It is significant, though, that the early Christians do not accept this description with its implication that they are just a Jewish splinter group. They never think of themselves either as a new religion supplanting the old, or as a “system,” but as a group of people called by God to witness to a tremendous experience and to live that experience in their own lives and, as far as possible, transmit it to others. They refer

to themselves mostly as “The Way” which reminds us of Jesus’ words: “I am the Way,” recorded by John.

It was Paul’s great contribution to have worked this truth out ruthlessly to its logical conclusions and not just in theory but in the arena of everyday life. It would take another book to show in detail and illustrate how he worked out the principle that Judaism was superseded for the Christian—circumcision, the integral observance of the Torah, food laws, the sacrificial system, all gave way to the new reality in Christ. He reacted violently to any attempt at going back to what they had left behind. There is, as Paul knew well, a recurring tendency in our human nature to fall back on routine, on fixed form, seeking security both religious and intellectual in just going through the paces without trying to think through to the meaning of what we are doing—if it has any. “Why do you submit to regulations?” he snaps at the Colossians. “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” “You observe days and months and seasons and years!” he says to the Galatians in despair, “I am afraid I have labored over you in vain.” Already, in such a short time, they had turned that tremendous hope, that *Presence*, into a “religion” of the Tibetan prayer-wheel type.

CONSEQUENCE FOR RELIGION

In a real sense, therefore, the fact that Judaism was superseded meant that *religion as such was*, since all the religious movements of history find their answer in Christ on the cross, Christ risen from the dead. Therefore being a Christian for Paul did not mean professing a religion in the dictionary sense of “a system of faith and worship,” but realizing the cross and the new, risen life of Christ in one’s own life. How this was to be done we shall see at a later stage.

4. *God Comes to Us through Christ Only in the Church*

It might have escaped us in reading the accounts of Paul’s conversion that the voice said to him: “I am Jesus whom you are

persecuting," implying the identity of Jesus and the Church; also that he was not given a private revelation of hidden truths, as we might expect from similar incidents in other religions, but was put in touch with a member of the Damascus Christian community who cured, instructed and baptized him. Community, belonging together, mutual interdependence is essential to the Christian life.

It is a fact that God's call, even when made in individuals, is always in view of the group, the community. Abraham is called, but only in view of the blessing intended for his descendants; the Exodus, the pivot and fulcrum of Old Testament revelation, is a social experience resulting in the creation of a sacred community; the kings are important only as representatives of the people, since they have no destiny and no place in God's scheme apart from the destiny of the people of God. *The* theme of the prophetic books is that of the identity and survival of that people, which is *not* identical with historical Israel as such, the nation with its king, since God's call went out before the nation came into existence, and when it finally came to fulfillment the nation as such had ceased to exist. God calls a person, therefore, out of the world and into his sacred community.

ANONYMOUS CHRISTIAN

We might feel like objecting at this point—with very many others at the present day—Why can't I just set up my own private understanding with God? Why should the Christian Church make such a peremptory claim on my attention to the exclusion of any other possibility? We have to be careful in answering this very reasonable objection. "Signed up" membership in the Church is not always necessary for achieving the object of life, which is reconciliation with God; else what of the millions of good living pagans in the world today who have no remote hope of receiving baptism? At the same time, no one can go to God except through Christ, which implies that there must exist a hidden order of grace, a hidden contact with Christ and the Church by which the good Buddhist, Taoist

or Mohammedan is saved—or even the good person who belongs to no organized faith. The situation of these people can be compared to that of those outside the boundaries of God's people in the old order before Christ. Even within the rather narrow-minded and exclusive Jewish community of the Exile and after, this idea began to penetrate—"Shall I not pity Nineveh in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left? (Jonah 4:11).

COMMUNITY OF FAITH

God's call to enter the Church does not, then, come to all, but when it comes it must be accepted—with faith, without questioning, even when no guarantees are given; that is why Abraham is the ideal of all true believers. Faith means, first and foremost, saying "Yes" to God's invitation. The fact is that God's plan, the mystery in the sense explained above, can be fulfilled only through a community. Isolated individuals cannot throw any effective weight against the gravitational force of sin in the world, even when serving God according to their lights. Moreover, and this is the decisive answer, the Church is *for* the world; it is God's way of working out the destiny of mankind and of all creation which depends upon mankind. That is what Paul means when he speaks of making all men see "what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that *through the Church* the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known" (in Ephesians 3:9-10). We cooperate with this design whether we like it or not or even whether we think of it or not; but God has invited us Christians to do so freely, as free citizens of the divine commonwealth.

There is a feeling abroad in our day, even more so than in Paul's, of the desirability and even necessity of unity and convergence in mankind. This movement toward unity has to overcome barriers at different levels: nationalism, social class distinction, racialism and the like by finding the common element, the fundamental human element which unites men together.

It is at this level that the Church works, and we Christians believe that it is only through the Church that this unity, which is fundamentally moral in character, can be accomplished, for all who are baptized members of the Church share the common dignity of children of God:

In Christ Jesus you are all sons of

God by faith, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

(Galatians 3:26-28)

New Ecumenical Trends

John J. McNamee

TULSA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES SELECTS PRIEST AS REPRESENTATIVE TO WCC ASSEMBLY AT UPPSALA

The old university town of Uppsala is back to normal, — ancient, blasé, long-suffering, — yet it has never seen anything like the cross-section of people to which it was host for three weeks in July. About 3,000 people gathered under the auspices of the World Council of Churches Fourth Assembly to work out the present-day implications of Rev. 21, 5: "Behold, I make all things new." What does all this add up to?

This was the latest, and indeed the most significant in many ways, of a series of encounters among Christians of varying traditions, seeking unity "in accordance with the will of Christ." In the confusion of the rapid missionary expansion of the Christian Churches in the nineteenth century into countries and continents that previously had been non-Christian, the various national and denominational

churches of Europe and the United States had been transplanted as well. This created two major problems: a) competition and overlapping among the missionary groups; b) distrust and suspicion by the "younger" churches of the "western" churches because of their divisions.

To deal with some of these problems the World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910. These discussions led to the formation in 1921 of the International Missionary Council, which though not a legislative power acted as a clearing house for planning and coordination. This consolidation of mission work supplied the motivation and initiative for the quest for unity during the rest of the decade. A call was issued for a World Conference on Faith and Order, which was finally answered at Lausanne in 1927; — "faith" being the various interpretations of

doctrine and creed, and "order" having to do with church government, ministry and sacraments, and the unity of Christendom.

Running parallel with the Faith and Order conferences were two ecumenical gatherings on "Life and Work," in Stockholm in 1925 and in Oxford in 1937. The concern of this group was the relationship of the church and state; the church and the economic order; the church and education; etc. Out of two 1937 conferences, both held in Great Britain and both having a large number of delegates in common, grew the idea of a World Council of Churches. Plans begun in 1938, slowed down due to World War II, culminated in the First Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948.

SIGNIFICANT HEALTHY GROWTH

One of the major issues facing the WCC at the outset was organization. It was not a legislative authority, not a super-church. Its constitution laid down a "basis" for membership: "The WCC is a fellowship of Churches which accept Our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior." From the time of the WCC's first general assembly the progress of the ecumenical movement has been constant and rapid. The assemblies in Evanston (1954) and New Delhi (1961) witnessed the addition of member churches, a gradual movement toward theological consensus, and the increasing ability of the member churches to work together on common projects. Uppsala should have been no different. More churches than ever before were represented, — 232 in all; theological consensus had at least not regressed; the churches had learned to cooperate in social and international affairs; Vatican II's decree on Ecumenism had placed the Roman Catholic Church squarely in the ecumenical field. The implications of this decree were made clear by the establishment in 1965 of the Roman Catholic-World Council of Churches Joint Working Group along with the Exploratory Committee on Society, Development and Peace (SODEPAX) in 1967. Indications for progress were bright.

When the Sorbonne was occupied by students in the spring riots in Paris, some-

one wrote on the wall: "For 2,000 years Christians have talked about 'Love your neighbor,' when will they do something about it?" Not so long ago we would have offered as a rebuttal the personal life of the average Christian. Today a growing number of Christians can no longer accept that the Gospel of Christ be limited to one's relationship with the neighbor next door. To do this would be diametrically opposed to the Good Samaritan parable. They now discover that the Good News is not concerned with private life to the exclusion of man's life in society. They now realize that they can no longer reduce sin simply to individual transgressions of the moral law. They see the menace of hunger, the misery of war. They see the dignity of man, whom they believe is created in the image of God, sneered at by social, economic, racial and even religious discrimination. They see the apathy of the churches, locked in by theological or liturgical problems that seem singularly trivial in such a torn world, while the most one has learned to expect is some half-hearted statements that change nothing. Indeed one of the points the youth delegation underscored most strongly was that there was no need for further statements, if we insured that the ones we already had from previous work would be put into effect.

THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Within the theological spectrum at the assembly, at the risk of caricaturing attitudes, which were often diverse and very nuanced according to the subject concerned, one can distinguish two currents of thinking: a fundamentalist type which puts emphasis on an almost literal understanding of the Bible, and on the call to an individual conversion and salvation; one which affirms that the Gospel calls the Christian to a transforming encounter with the structures of society, love and service of neighbor which must necessarily have a communal and even political dimension. This latter current frequently used the biblical theme of the assembly, "Behold, I make all things new" to talk about the Christian's role in creating a new world.

Add to this a third current, the Orthodox. This was the first WCC assembly where the whole range of Orthodoxy was present in large numbers. Theologically one might call them conservative, not, certainly in the fundamentalist sense, but in the sense that they are concerned with not losing contact with a tradition nourished by the Fathers of the Oriental Church. The great majority are not ready to reformulate their traditional dogmas in the light of contemporary religious and social needs, as is happening today in the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. They are concerned lest Christianity become overly anthropocentric. Metropolitan Emilianos voiced some fear on the part of the Orthodox in this area at the assembly: "I am afraid that there will be a dangerous tendency at Uppsala to overstate the earthly character of Christianity's purpose."

CHURCH AND WORLD

From within the diversity of these perspectives, the question of the mandate of the Church in relationship to the world is a difficult one to answer. Visser T'Hooft feels that "there persists a great tension between the vertical interpretation of the Gospel as essentially concerned with human relations in the world." Then he went on to say that "Christianity is man-centered because it is God-centered. We cannot speak of Christ as the man for others without speaking of him as the man who came from God, and who lived for God." Christians must therefore offer the shrinking world a new conception of humanity. The Biblical doctrine of the unity of mankind is rooted in the creation of all men in the image of God, and in the re-creation of all humanity in Christ, as a family united under his reign.

The assembly itself was larger than ever before. With so many people trying to discuss so many things and produce so many documents in such a short time the deficiencies of the present system were painfully obvious. The problem of language, — the domination of English, — as well as of rules of procedure, — western in origin, and both confusing and frustrat-

ing the non-westerners, — were not easily resolved. With 69 percent of the delegates from Europe and North America, representation was predominantly white, western and affluent. All this served to accentuate the tension that already existed between western and "third world" participants. While western imperialism emerged as the major cause, historically and actually, of economic and social underdevelopment, it was equally obvious that the same imperialism was present in the area of culture and the cultural aspects of religion.

QUESTIONS OF YOUTH

In the pre-assembly meetings of the youth delegation the ability of the assembly to represent the point of view of the young people of the world was severely questioned. The average age of the delegates was in the late fifties, with 1 percent under 33. This factor, together with a lack of confidence in the structure, the "establishment," forced the young people into a role of "devil's advocate" whose prophetic presence was a constant call to honesty on the part of the delegates at every point in the assembly. While most worked tirelessly for effective means to implement the decisions of the assembly, some of the youth delegation felt that any concern with or discussion about structural unity was without value in a world in which we face the apparently unrelenting destructiveness of war, disease and hunger.

The temptation for the Vatican observers to compare this assembly with Vatican II was indulged in by many other participants as well. The differences, however, are both considerable and obvious. Unlike the pre-Vatican II Church, the WCC was already open to the world, already reform-minded, already unity-conscious, already involved in theological dialogue. Vatican II was an authoritative assembly for one church; the WCC assembly was legislative for the Council of Churches and consultative for the member churches. Vatican II had authority to make decisions and determine implementation; the assembly established basic policy but must leave the extent of implementation up to

the member churches. Vatican II was a meeting of more than 2,000 bishops for four years; the assembly of 700 delegates, lay and clerical, for almost three weeks.

Of special interest was the Orthodox delegation, because it was the biggest and the newest, yet it did not make any major contribution. The assembly discussions were from the perspective of a panprotestant mentality and the Orthodox are not yet at home here. The second-class role of women in the church came up several times, — 9 percent of the delegates were women, — and it was the vote of the Orthodox that defeated a motion to place a woman on the Praesidium. Yet they were more integrated into the proceedings than before, and it unquestionably was a step forward that there were no "Orthodox" positions put forward. While it used to be believed that the Orthodox would be a bridge across the Protestant-Roman Catholic chasm, it would now seem that the opposite is true. Rome will be the bridge between the Orthodox and Protestantism.

RELATIONS WITH VATICAN

Pope Paul, in issuing the "Credo of the People of God" at the end of the year of Faith, almost coincided with the opening of the WCC assembly. While officially the WCC felt this had nothing to do with it directly, or with the meeting at Uppsala, privately there was a great deal of apprehension. Yet one of the most noteworthy developments of the Uppsala assembly was the growing rapprochement between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. At the assembly the reality of Vatican — WCC relationships was strengthened and advanced even beyond the most optimistic predictions. For the first time Roman Catholics were named to the WCC's expanded Faith and Order Commission. Joint working groups already in existence were approved and given a broader mandate. The question of Roman Catholic membership had been viewed on both sides as theologically possible, but pastorally inadvisable.

The address of Fr. Roberto Tucci, the first major address by a Roman Catholic,

marked the official turning point in the Roman Catholic-World Council relationship, from back door observer to integrated associate. His stress on a common mission and a common confrontation of world problems, as well as the mutual recognition that there was only one ecumenical movement, pointed out that no insuperable obstacles remained. Along with a call to begin immediate studies into the advantages and obstacles to Roman Catholic membership, Tucci stressed cooperative social action as what Catholics were expecting from Uppsala. "Catholics welcome the effort being made to place the church at the service of the contemporary world, which in its distress is seeking a truly human solution for the tremendous problem of peace, development, the relationship between generations, the racial conflicts, oppression and violence."

CONTINUING DIFFICULTIES

But problems do remain, on the psychological and practical level: What response would other churches, even some who are already members, have to Rome's joining? How can one absorb a 500-million-member church into the WCC whose total membership represents about 320 million, without the fear of a "Catholic takeover?" Even though there were fifteen delegated observers from the Vatican, and practical cooperation is now official policy, Bishop Willebrands pointed out that the ecumenical movement must resist the tendency to be satisfied with practical cooperation: "Our final hope and goal is ecclesial unity." Yet the meaning of unity is not entirely clear, and the idea of structural unity, except in the very broadest of senses, would seem to be called into question. In this, ecumenical education is seen as very important, so that all Christians may know and understand what this structure of dialogue of the WCC means and stands for. Research in this area must be conveyed to the masses. Ecumenical education is the responsibility of all churches, at all levels. Its neglect at a popular level leaves us facing a problem of separating into two parallel efforts, elitist and grass-roots,

rather than complementary efforts.

If any issue emerged as a central topic, threading its way through most sections and dominating some, it was development. The theme had dominated the World Conference on Church and Society in Geneva and the Beirut Conference on World Cooperation for Development. It reappeared in the resentment of the "third world" against the rich white nations. But fear that time was running out was at least as evident at Uppsala as it had been at Geneva. In a speech calculated to impress upon his audience the sobering and sombre realities of the contemporary situation, President Kuanda of Zambia told the assembly that the present "disparity between the rich North and the poor South. . . is a threat if not already a danger to the peace and stability of the world." Kuanda deplored the "get rich quick" philosophy of foreign companies and banks of which his people were the unwitting and defenseless victims. He went on to underline that "development is a moral question as well as social and economic, it's a challenge to the Christian conscience." "The third world," Professor Parmar of India added, "does not want charity, it wants justice."

NEEDS OF POORER NATIONS

Dr. Barbara Ward, an internationally known economist, echoing Kuanda's remarks, added: "We face a strange situation. The descendants of the Son of Man, who loved the poor and rejected the pharisees, who, during his public life, did not have a place to lay his head, find themselves to a great extent members of an exclusive white club, with enormous revenues." As she had on previous occasions, Dr. Ward advocated for a start of a 1 percent tax on the Gross National Product of rich countries for foreign aid to developing nations, with renegotiation of prices to strengthen the international bargaining power of the developing nations. Her optimism about the ease with which this "situation of imbalance" could be righted was not always reflected in the discussions and actions of the assembly.

Perhaps the most electric moment at

the assembly was when author James Baldwin charged the church with betraying the black man and suggested that "the destruction of the Christian Church, as it is today, may not only be necessary but desirable." Stressing that most people are not evil, but afraid of acting on what they know, Baldwin seemed to have this assembly in mind, since in spite of a stinging indictment of Christian failure to combat racism, the assembly failed to come to terms with it and issue a statement condemning it. "We have precious little time," Lord Caradon added, "all those dangers, — of poverty and population and youth, — are desperately serious in themselves, but it is the addition of the race issue which so greatly adds to that danger."

EDUCATING THE DELEGATES

One of the main thrusts of the assembly was intended to be the work in sections. Here assembly participants debated over the Holy Spirit and the catholicity of the Church, renewal in mission, world economic and social development, justice and peace in international affairs, the worship of God in a secular age, and new styles of living. From the beginning of the assembly the "conditioning" of the participants for this work had been going on. From films, drama, art from Scandinavia as well as Sr. Corita's pop art, to tidal waves of spoken and written words, everything was geared to sensitizing them to the themes of the sections. With the war in Vietnam dragging on in apparently never-ending destruction of life and property, with Biafrans starving to death and tensions in the Middle East bubbling at a slow boil, with racial conflicts heightened around the world, with student unrest showing forth on both sides of the ideological spectrum, with millions dying or crippled from starvation and malnutrition, could this assembly be content with the reaffirmation of the status quo? In a world which for the first time has the technical capacity of wiping illiteracy, disease and hunger from the face of the earth, the moral imperative was clear and urgent. Whether the delegates were equal to all of this, and what the lasting results

of their efforts may be is hard to project.

Decisions were taken during the assembly in favor of family planning, the updating of Christian worship, modifying the programs or mission, a ban on nuclear weapons, a cessation of the bombing in North Vietnam, even the approval of selective conscientious objection, and the endorsement of 1 percent GNP as aid from the rich to the poor nations. Yet some questioned the value of suggesting concrete changes, when the system itself was in need of a far-reaching restructuring.

THE WIDER ECUMENISM

In attempting to assess the results of this assembly one might say that the underlying question for many participants was how we could tear down the walls and use the bricks to build bridges, not only with other Christian Churches but, together, with the whole family of man. Like the modern world, it faced a crisis of motivation. The root of the evil is that in an era when history demands that humanity live as a responsible and cohesive society, men continue to refuse responsibility for their neighbor.

The emphasis at Uppsala was on facing the problems of the world, in particular the gap between the rich white nations and the underdeveloped third world. The role of the third world delegates and that of the youth delegation constantly intertwined, because of a shared concern. While leadership among the youth was sometimes confused and sometimes divided, they were a constant reminder that mere verbalisms or resolutions were not sufficient. On the other hand the third world churchmen did not give leadership, perhaps because the delegates were older, establishment people, from small, conservative churches that live in fear of their governments. Yet this last group had the least cause to believe the promises of the white church of the west, since they were the victims of white racism, exploitation and western imperialism.

The contribution of Uppsala will be, if not a change of direction, at least a change of perspective. While the WCC has

been committed to world problems since its inception, this was the first time it brought the focus of the church on the world on a massive scale. It was the beginning of a recognition that we share enough in common as Christians to begin considering world problems in the light of the Christian message. The assembly turned from the inside outward, from ecclesiastical business to world business. It officially endorsed a major shift to the problem of the relationship of the church to the creative role of servant that it must occupy in the world.

For the delegates it was a profoundly educational experience. Because of the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the participants, western participants in particular became aware of something of the problem of the religious, cultural and economic imperialism of the west. World problems took on a new sense of urgency.

The section reports, all of which were finally accepted, suffered greatly from the lack of availability of experts at many critical junctures in discussion and formulation. This, along with the acute lack of time, within which the sections came to what might be called a "consensus" theological position, leaves these documents something less than one would have hoped for.

LEARNING AS WE WORK

The assembly could be summed up as a ratification of commitments already made, and an anticipation of future developments, rather than an initiation of new directions. The speed at which Uppsala moved was often tantalizingly slow, with little progress visible at times, but perhaps this kind of assembly is meant to take modest steps in new directions. The pressure now is on the member churches, because if they act on even a fraction of the commitments they have agreed to at Uppsala, this could mean a second Pentecost, in terms of renewal. That this will happen, I doubt, but we are now as Christians personally and in ecclesial bodies challenged to put our actions where our words are. "We know enough to start; the remaining tasks we can learn only on the building sites."

Books Received

A New Look at
Christian Morality
Charles E. Curran
Fides Publishers. \$5.95

Father Curran personifies the debate caused by the disinclination of many Catholics to grasp the principles of a renewed moral theology despite the biblical, pastoral and philosophical scholarship on which it is so firmly based. This gentle, scholarly, good priest, recently found himself at the center of two theological storms that made headlines everywhere. This book is a collection of his latest essays, and gives an excellent presentation of his views on the Christian moral life.

Included is his article from the *Commonweal* number on Jesus a year ago, in which he writes on "The Ethical Teachings of Jesus." Another article treats the topic of conversion in the life of the Christian. There is a somewhat brief article on his teacher, Bernard Haring; a "Dialogue with Joseph Fletcher; and a paper on mixed marriages that discusses the problem with attention to its ecumenical aspects. Another chapter treats the question of "Grave Matter" in a study of masturbation. An Epilogue on Christian responsibility serves as a kind of unifying thread for the collection.

To each of his papers, Father Curran brings a warm concern for people who seek sound moral guidance in their lives, a talent for selecting the key issues, love of the Church and quiet courage. And he does his homework in the sources that serve an authentic Christian mission. A book to be read and pondered.

Speaking of
Religious Education
Gerard Sloyan
Herder and Herder. \$5.95

This collection of essays is assembled from articles and talks prepared by Father Sloyan over some six years. They reflect

the preoccupations of one who has been the most distinguished catechist in the United States for many years. Former chairman of the Religious Education Department at the Catholic University, he served ably as president of the Liturgical Conference and also as president of the College Theology Society. He brought to all these tasks a good mind, a sympathy for men of our time, and a courageous determination to serve the cause of renewal in the Church.

These essays reflect all these and many other related concerns. The topics range over a wide field, including Liturgy, Faith, the homily at Mass, the significance of Israel and Peace. Particular questions deal with the age for first confession, the Sister, and the public worship of the Church and an appeal for the kind of peace based on Christ's message.

Although written for or delivered to a wide variety of audiences and readers, and adapted to their different needs and expectations, the personality of a learned, warm, concerned priest does come through. We are all involved in religious education, clerics, teachers, hierarchy, laity — and there is much here to learn by every one of us.

The Catechetical Experience
John J. Murphy
Herder and Herder. \$3.95

This is a personal account of a catechetical experiment with male high school seniors. The catechist was concerned to bring them to a deeper understanding of their natural and Christian community, its nature and necessity, and how God intended to establish and maintain it in vigor. The principal sources employed were "the Constitution on the Church" of Vatican II; Pope John's encyclical "Pacem in Terris"; and the Fourth Gospel.

The teacher chose a student-oriented approach, preferring to stimulate and encourage the students rather than dominate

by lecturing. This inevitably raised the problems of how to guide free discussion, and give tactful aid in reaching conclusions while eliciting the student's personal discoveries. In all this the writer is candid regarding his wins and losses. The liturgy both as worship of God and a service to the assembled community, comes through excellently. And the teacher stirred interest and helped understanding by guest speakers, novels, movies, a visit to the U.N., and trips to the inner city.

He discovered that the major obstacles to a full grasp of the implications of community were ignorance of the nature of liturgy, lack of acquaintance with scripture, and a heritage of religious individualism which lingers despite growing interest in community. A highly interesting and suggestive experiment.

Towards a Theology
of Christian Faith
Canisianum Symposium
P. J. Kenedy. \$5.95

This is the most recent volume of the series of "Readings in Theology" by the theological students at the Jesuit seminary located at Innsbruck in Austria. And it is a sumptuous feast that they have prepared. In thirteen chapters, it deals with some of the main aspects of faith that engage our current attention. The book's merit is that it brings together outstanding papers that would otherwise be unavailable to the ordinary reader. Some of the best of our contemporary theologians are represented, and while all the papers have great merit there are two that should be widely read.

The compilers wisely chose Avery Dulles, S.J., to introduce the general theme. His paper on "The Modern Dilemma of Faith" is a gem. After discussing the question of faith especially in the United States, as it has been affected by world events and by Vatican II, he dwells especially on four features of this virtue which, if properly understood, should not present the obstacles generally associated with them. These are: the alleged passivity of faith, over-intellectualism, our attitude towards rational and scientific criticism and our responsibility toward the new intellectual and spir-

itual world now in the making. Father Dulles is at his superb best in this essay.

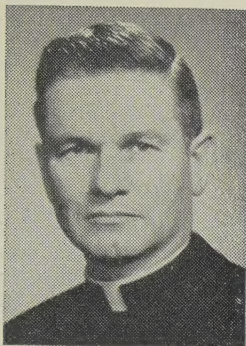
Although the title is somewhat awkward, Johannes B. Metz in his paper "The Future of Belief in a Hominized World" gives us one of the most penetrating and hopeful essays I have read in a long time. He tackles the problem presented to faith by the contemporary world-view that has shifted so dramatically. Once man looked at the world, tried laboriously to discover its secrets, and discovered God in the process. Man now, through science and technology, has assumed stupendous control over nature. He is the architect and maker of his world to a degree never before experienced. Father Metz analyzes the facts, faces the problems they pose for theism and for Christian faith. And he establishes the fact that much of this fascinating development actually has its deep roots in Christian teaching! Without minimizing the dangers in all this, he concludes that there is a rich promise for living faith in our new world-view!
J.T.M.

GUIDE

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GUIDE

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Guide Lights

CRISIS IN FAITH . . .

The contemporary situation in the Church is often described as a crisis in faith. The phrase itself can be read in different ways depending upon how much content one finds in the word "faith". For some, who are generous in the place they assign to doctrine within the concept of faith, the reaction to the Pope's recent encyclical is evidence enough of such a crisis. For others, who find religious observance the test of belief, the noticeable indifference on the part of so many young people to the practice of their faith likewise lends conviction to this sense of crisis. Looking around at the upheaval in the Church and listening to the bewilderment and gropings of so many Catholics there is ample reason to conclude that however one looks at faith he is bound to find a crisis. Because it is so widespread in its manifestations, the subject of the crisis in faith is much too vast to discuss as a whole. There are a great many different aspects to it and most of them have received considerable attention from theologians and religious sociologists and psychologists. However, the *pastoral* implications of this crisis have not always been explored very thoroughly, and I would like to offer a few reflections of a strictly pastoral nature upon the whole situation that we describe as the crisis in faith.

PASTORAL ROOTS . . .

The adjective "pastoral" I take to mean that which deals with the realities of church life and the functioning of her various ministries. From this viewpoint the pastoral situation over the years has been partly, if understandably, responsible for occasioning the crisis. Look at what has

happened. Church life assumes particular forms and patterns not so much from design as from a quite natural outgrowth of the daily lives of the people. The church life that is familiar to us came about in another age when people's lives were lived considerably differently than they are today. Yet little in the basic form reflects these changes. Church-going, parochial structures and organizations, liturgical worship (even with all of the changes), religious instruction in and out of school, all of these things while internally adapted in countless ways nevertheless would be still quite recognizable to the average Catholic of fifty years ago. This might not be so important if everything else remained the same too, but as everyone knows, it hasn't.

THE MEANING OF IRRELEVANT . . .

People who live any form of life for a long period of time make the necessary adaptations to it. This is true whatever be the merits of the form of life itself. The problem arises with those who do not have a lengthy experience of church life and who, as it were, find little in their first look at it to encourage the kind of lengthy exposure that will adjust them to it. Hence, the critical and often negative appraisal by the younger generation of so much of contemporary Catholic life. Because of their generally greater exposure to other forms of contemporary life, both directly and through a heightened communications receptivity, the discontinuity between the forms of church life and the more mobile patterns that they see elsewhere strikes them with a special force. Unlike their parents, the ways of church life are not that rooted enough in the over-all environment so as to be taken as part of the landscape. Thus the question is asked "what do all these things have to do with real life?" Once the question is seriously asked then

the possibility of an alternate answer already exists, and in pastoral terms, in the face of such a choice, a crisis in faith becomes real.

DIFFICULTIES OF RESPONSE . . .

At this point those who are at home in the traditional forms of church life have an added difficulty about answering the very serious questions raised by their children. The special difficulty comes about in this way. The private test for most of us about the adequacy of any form of church life is probably some kind of personal religious experience. "It means something to me." However, this is not an adequate answer to the question raised by someone who does not yet share that kind of experience. The questioner is distracted enough by the, to him, noticeable discrepancy between the pattern of church life and the patterns that efficiently organize and control the rest of his life. Also, he is struck by individual items of church life and raises specific questions about them individually. Once again the church veteran has difficulty answering in these terms for most people generally find that as time goes on the specific content of Catholic practice means less to them, while the whole of it means more. The result is that after some futile attempts to communicate the experience of a lifetime in some kind of verbal argument the parties recognize that they are really talking about different things, and that it is very difficult if not impossible for them to really understand each other. The result is that the young person often does not see reason enough to stick around and acquire the experience that might alter his judgment, and the older person throws up his hands in despair, and perhaps reads much more into the question than the particular "crisis" actually contains.

PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CRISIS . . .

If this brief analysis has any merit it should be obvious that there can be no one pastoral solution to the difficulties it raises. A great deal was said at Vatican II and since about the desirability of more diversity within the Church, and the existence of such crises is ample reason why there should be many different applications of pastoral ministry within a parish. Obviously those who are at home in contemporary forms of church life should not be encour-

aged to abandon them at least until something as adequate is available. At the same time, those who have no experience and little attraction for these forms should be offered other alternatives. Hence the need for experimentation and flexibility in the programs and services offered in the parish. However, it should be stressed that this approach is very limited and cannot be a long-term solution to the basic pastoral problem. It is unlikely though that this kind of basic adaptation will come about for some time. So the path suggested is really a kind of band-aid treatment.

OVERHAULING CHURCH LIFE . . .

Since the crisis is so basic a lot of things are going to have to happen before it is resolved. Some new organic graft between the daily life of Catholics and their church life is going to have to come about. We are not prepared to do this now. What we may expect however is that new points of contact between the two will be gradually uncovered and their natural affinity recognized. Much of the present exaltation of the secular is really concerned with this problem. It is still too new, too massive and too confusing to see exactly how it will work out. However, the identification of certain basic human values that predominate in secular society today will go a long way toward suggesting particular points of departure. If these, however meritorious, seem to be remote from the specifics of the gospel, let us remember that we are living in one of the key transition points of church history and that it is both understandable and necessary that a good deal of the Church's concentration at this juncture is going to have to be on the secular life of man. It is because of what is happening *out there* that we are in crisis. The Church must always consider the situation of the people she addresses. Often she must spend some time preparing a climate in which effective dialogue can occur. This is called pre-evangelization. It is quite likely that in the difficult times of change in which we live a great deal of time and effort will have to be given to this pre-evangelization task. In our time, pre-evangelization may consist largely in the search and discovery of the human values prized by our contemporaries, which because they are real values, deserve a place in the Christian life.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.